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Backyard Biosecurity Practices To Keep Your Birds Healthy



What Is **Backyard** Biosecurity?

Backyard biosecurity means doing everything you can to protect your birds from disease. As a bird owner, keeping your birds healthy is a top priority. Your birds can become sick or die from exposure to just a few unseen germs. In a single day, these germs can multiply and infect all of your birds. By practicing backyard biosecurity, you can help keep your birds healthy.

Backyard biosecurity is basically the same thing we do every day to protect ourselves from many human infections. We use personal hygiene to protect ourselves from germs. We wash our hands and our dishes, avoid contact with people sick with the flu and colds, and cover our mouths and noses when we sneeze to prevent the germs from spreading to others.

Protect Your Birds

If you follow these basic tips and make them part of your routine, you reduce the risk of disease entering your flock through contaminated soil, droppings, and debris.

Practicing backyard biosecurity is an investment in the health of your birds.

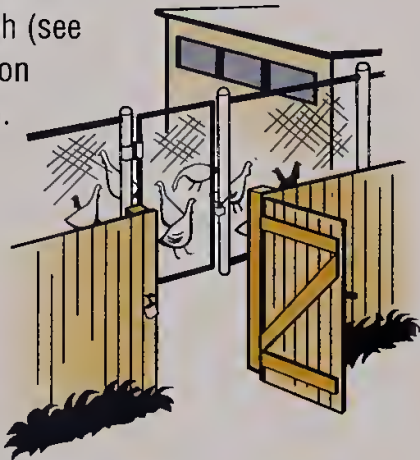
**You
are the best
protection
your birds have.**

Biosecurity Tips: 6 Ways To Prevent Poultry Disease

1 Keep Your Distance.

Protect your birds from other people and other birds. Both the new birds you've just bought and wild birds can carry diseases that could spread quickly to your flock. There are a few key things you can do to keep disease away from your birds:

- Allow only people who take care of your birds to come into contact with them. Caretakers should not attend bird shows or other events and places where birds are present.
- If visitors want to see your birds, be sure they wash up first and clean their shoes. Better yet, keep clean boots for them to wear. You also can keep a clean footbath for them to walk through (see "Making an Easy Footbath" section of this brochure for instructions).
- If visitors have birds of their own, do not let them near your birds.
- Consider fencing off the area where your birds are by forming a barrier so that you have a "clean" area surrounding your birds. The buffer area should be considered "dirty," or infected with germs.
- Wild birds should not have contact with your flock because they carry germs and diseases. If your birds are outdoors, try to keep them in a screened area.
- Avoid visiting farms or other households with poultry.



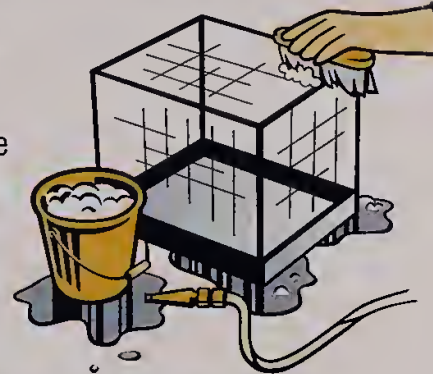
2 Keep It Clean.

Germs can be picked up on shoes and clothing and moved from one place to another.

- To keep your birds "germ-free," have a pair of shoes and a set of clothes to wear only around your birds. Many people keep these clean clothes in a covered pail at the entrance to their bird area. You also can keep a clean footbath at the entrance to your bird area.
- Clean and disinfect your shoes if you are not putting on clean ones. Remove mud, debris, and droppings before

disinfecting the shoes, and scrub them with a long-handled scrub brush and disinfectant (see section on disinfectants).

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or a disinfectant before entering your bird area.
- Clean and disinfect equipment that comes in contact with your birds or their droppings, including tools and cages.
- Clean off all dirt and manure before you disinfect or the disinfectant won't work.
- Clean cages and food and water containers daily.
- Birds deaths are a fact of life. Be sure to properly dispose of dead birds. Check with local officials for acceptable disposal methods.



3 Don't Haul Disease Home.

Car and truck tires, poultry cages, and equipment all can harbor germs, and you don't want to bring these germs home.

- If you take some of your birds to a fair or exhibition, keep those birds separated from the rest of your flock for at least 2 weeks afterward.
- New birds should be kept separate from your flock for at least 30 days. It is also best not to mix young and old birds or birds from different species or different sources.
- Buy birds from a reputable source.
- If you travel to a place where there are other birds, even to the feed store, be sure to clean and disinfect car and truck tires before returning home.

4 Don't Borrow Disease From Your Neighbor.

Sharing tools, equipment, poultry supplies, or birds with other bird owners or your neighbors can be risky.

- If you do bring these items home, clean and disinfect them before they reach your property.
- Never share wood pallets or cardboard egg cartons because they are porous and cannot be adequately cleaned and disinfected.
- Avoid visiting farms or other households with poultry.

5 Know the Warning Signs of Infectious Bird Diseases.

It can be hard to tell if your birds have avian influenza (AI) or exotic Newcastle disease (END), two infectious bird diseases. However, if you know the signs, you might be able to tell if something is wrong. Early detection can help prevent the spread of disease. Signs that your birds could be infected with AI or END include:

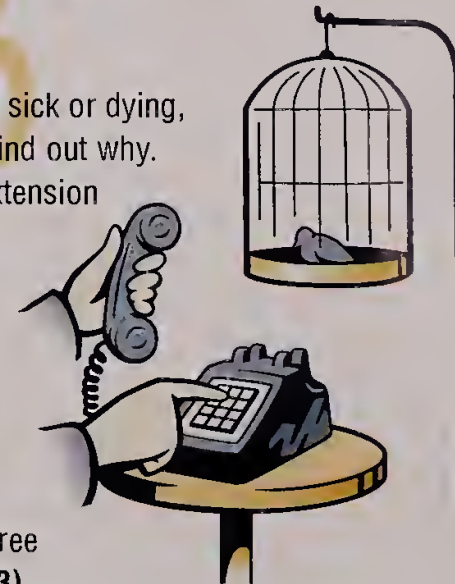
- Sudden increase in bird deaths in your flock
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing, and nasal discharge
- Watery and green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck, and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs (AI)
- Tremors, drooping wings, circling, twisting of the head and neck, or lack of movement (END)

6 Report Sick Birds

Don't wait. If your birds are sick or dying, call one of the following to find out why.

- Your local cooperative extension office
- Your veterinarian
- The State Veterinarian or State animal/poultry diagnostic laboratory
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Veterinary Services toll-free number (1-866-536-7593)

There is no charge for USDA veterinarians to work with you to conduct a disease investigation. Early reporting is important to protect your birds' health.



Using Disinfectants

Cleaning and disinfecting is one of the most important steps you can take in practicing backyard biosecurity. It is important to remember that surfaces must be clean for disinfectants to work.

- Since disinfectants cannot work on top of caked-on dirt and manure, brush off loose dirt and manure first. Thoroughly clean and scrub items before applying disinfectant.
- Apply disinfectant using brushes, sponges, and spray units. Allow adequate contact time (follow the manufacturer's instructions).
- Dispose of used disinfectant according to local regulations.

Examples of Disinfectants

For the best results, carefully follow the directions on the label of your disinfectant. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registers pesticide products, including disinfectants. Approximately 100 disinfectant products are registered and intended for use against avian influenza A viruses on hard, non-porous surfaces.

This list of disinfectants is available online at www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/avian.htm. Additionally, you can use:

- **Household bleach (sodium hypochlorite 6 percent):** Mix $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of bleach per gallon of water. Use it to disinfect tools, equipment, and hard surfaces.
- **Waterless hand sanitizers:** These come in gel form or as hand wipes. Be sure to work the cleaner all through your fingers and under your nails.
- **Spray disinfectants:** Be sure the label says that the product kills bacteria and viruses. Use it to spray shoes and boots.

Making an Easy Footbath

You will need:

1. A low plastic pan or bin, wide enough to fit an adult's foot and shallow enough to step into easily
2. A plastic doormat (the "fake grass" mats work well)
3. A disinfectant that works when manure or dirt is present
4. Water

Mix the disinfectant with water following the label instructions. Put the doormat in the plastic pan. Add the disinfectant so that the bottom of the "grass" is wet. Ask visitors to walk through the footbath, wiping their feet on the mat. The "grass" scrubs their shoes a bit as they wipe them and applies the disinfectant. When the liquid starts to get dirty, empty the pan, and put in new disinfectant.

Why Be Concerned?

Not only could an outbreak of a bird disease such as AI or END harm or kill your birds, it could also spread quickly and kill other nearby birds. In addition, an outbreak could seriously damage the domestic poultry industry and affect trade with other countries. The United States is the world's largest poultry producer, the second-largest egg producer, and the largest exporter of poultry meat. With so much at stake, bird owners should remember that:

- Early detection and reporting is the most important step in eradicating a disease outbreak. State and Federal veterinarians want to know if birds are sick or dying.
- There is no charge for USDA veterinarians to work with you to conduct a disease investigation.

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LOOK for Signs.

Watch for signs of disease or unexpected deaths among your birds.



REPORT Sick Birds.

Don't wait. Early detection and reporting can make a difference. If your birds are sick or dying, call your local cooperative extension agent, your veterinarian, the State veterinarian or State animal/poultry diagnostic laboratory, or USDA toll-free at **1-866-536-7593**.



PROTECT Your Birds.

Take a few simple steps: Restrict traffic onto your property. Disinfect shoes, clothes, and equipment. Wash hands thoroughly. Keep other birds and people away from your birds.

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